

R. & L.

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1871.

Subject: The True Heroism of Labor.

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PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE TRUE HEROISM OF LABOR.

I propose, this morning, to follow the tenor of the Scripture which I read in your hearing as a part of the opening service. It is remarkable in one respect, as being more nearly a connected view of a day in Christ's life than we are accustomed to find in the Gospel narratives. For we are to remember that those literary devices which have become so familiar that a child understands them in our day, were quite unknown to the simple and humble recorders of the life of Christ. No one would think, now, of writing a person's life without having regard to the element of time—without recording events in the order in which they occurred, and in their probable relation or juxtaposition to each other. But while there is a sort of regard in the narratives of the evangelists to chronology, there cannot be a doubt that events are frequently grouped in such a way that all thought of time is lost, so that we cannot tell whether a given parable was spoken early or late, or where five or six parables are recorded in one chapter, whether all of them were spoken at one time, or whether they were picked up like pearls and strung together.

Now and then we have what we may call an *interior*. A sort of window or door opens, through which we may look in; and we see a scene in its inception, in its development, and in its termination. It is organized, as it were, in itself, so that we see it perfectly, just as if we were on the spot at the time of its occurrence. And such I think is the scene, a description of which I have read in your hearing.

It took place in the early part of the last year of the Saviour's ministry—the main, the harvest year. He was in Galilee. He had been working many miracles; he had been delivering many discourses; he had made one or two circuits throughout Galilee, preaching in the cities and villages. All the great cities around the edge of the Lake of Galilee had witnessed his power. Capernaum, which had become his home after he was rejected from Nazareth, his childhood home, became his headquarters during all the rest of his ministry. He had just delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The next event recorded in his history was the working of a miracle—the raising to life of the widow's son at Nain. That,

joined to all the other things which he did, had given a new impulse to his fame. The common people were enthusiastic over him. There was no drawback in their case. And although the Pharisees had begun to find occasion for bitter dislike, they had not yet thought it meet to break with him openly. There were some secret councils against him, but they had not assumed much importance outwardly; and so, it may be said that he stood at the height of his popularity at that time. And he was followed and believed in by the great mass of the common people. They believed in *him*, even if they did not believe in his doctrine. And he was not yet openly opposed by the ruling forces of society.

It was at this time that John, the old lion-heart, was cooped up in a prison—in the castle of Machærus, on the east side of the Dead Sea—one of those old castles made in times of war, perched high up on a cliff, and looking into a deep and dark gorge through which a stream ran from the eastern mountains into the Dead Sea. Afar off, he heard of the fame of this preacher. He had himself been shut up. His work seemed to have come to an end. We have not a single syllable as to the man's history; but he lay in that dark prison. We know the history of the termination of his witness and life; but of what he thought and how he felt there is no record, except this little gleam. As it were, against the walls of this great castle there came echoes of the miracles and wonders of Christ, and of the enthusiasm of the people which he was exciting in Galilee. These echoes had stirred John up to know whether the man who was doing these things was that man of whom he had been taught that he was the forerunner. And so he sent forth some of his disciples—who, it seems, were allowed access to him. They came to Christ in Galilee, and said,

"John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come [art thou the prophet that was expected]? or look we [waiting and watching] for another?"

Now, it would seem to us as though the Saviour might have said, at once, "I am he," but it is a remarkable fact that, up to this time, our Saviour had not declared himself to be the Messiah. If he had done it to his disciples, it was privately. In public he had not even taken upon himself the name of *the Son of God*. He called himself *the Son of Man*. He appeared to the people, and, for aught that he had said or done, they had a right to suppose that he was simply a Jewish prophet; and that was the testimony which went out in respect to him. That was what the common people said of him.

"And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people."

When John sent his disciples, therefore, to ask whether Christ was the Messiah (for that is the purport of the question), we should suppose that he would have replied, at least confidentially, to his faithful forerunner, John, saying, "Yes, I *am* he;" but instead of that, he said,

"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen."

What things had they seen? It seems to have been one of those fruitful hours in the Saviour's history. Christ was not fruitful at all times, either in his discourses or in his marvelous works; but he had periods of fruitfulness; and he seems then to have stood on the edge of one of them. It is recorded:

"In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight."

Instead of answering categorically the question put to him, he said,

"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached."

That last was the most wonderful stroke of the whole of it. In that corrupt and oppressive age, in that unfeeling, avaricious, grinding country, under that despotic government, humanity, taking care of the poor, was the most astonishing of all. Not the raising of the dead, not the restoring of hearing nor sight, was so wonderful as that there should be a heart that really occupied itself with thinking of the poor.

"To the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

With that answer the messengers retired.

This interview seems to have given to Christ a text; for he took his texts not out of the Old Testament—except those for synagogical days. Those he did. But the discourses which he delivered through the week were discourses that sprang from some incident or some history. And this event seems to have given him a text. He began to question the multitude as to why it was that they were interested in John—knowing that they were. Looking around upon them, he said,

"What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"

In other words, "Did you think that there was some necromancer, some mountebank, some deft, dextrous man, that, as it were, dazzled your eye, as it is dazzled by the shaking of a reed that stands weak and helpless in the wind? Did you go out to see a man that would shake before you with some spectacular effect that had no validity?" There were some that went on that account, undoubtedly.

"What went ye out for to see A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in Kings' courts."

It was if he had said, "If you went out to see a man that came in all the circumstance of your land, as a prince, gorgeously appareled, and with all the insignia of wealth and power upon him, you should not have gone down to the wilderness of the Jordan. That is not the place in which such men would appear. You should have gone to cities.

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet?"

There was no bait that took so universally as a prophet, with the people of Palestine. They would run for that when they would not run for anything else. They were always hoping for a prophet. They were a people peculiarly addicted to prophets. Prophets were a wonder. They were regarded as more than ordinary men. There was nothing that whetted curiosity more. There was nothing that the people more desired to have among them. And the very imposters assumed to be prophets' sons, and availed themselves of the national pride and faith and credulity.

"Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet."

And now he enlarges upon John's character. He eulogizes him. He also measures and ranks him. I do not think that we can follow and sympathize here. We are obliged to take the declaration at what it is worth. There are no indications by which we can set a judgment upon the life and deeds of John. This is the eulogy:

"I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

When you recall such men as Samuel, as Elijah, as Elisha, as Jeremiah, as Isaiah, as Ezekiel, and as the constellation of minor prophets, and when you recollect what deeds they performed, it seems very strange that this lone preacher in the wilderness of the Jordan should have been ranked with them, and preferred before them. Certainly, he never was occupied with any such events of history as the prophet of Ahab's day was. Certainly, he was not concerned much with scenes of weird and dramatic effect as the old prophets were. Clothed in skins, as often they were (I suppose that if we had seen Elijah we would have believed him to be a Bedouin, and a wild Bedouin at that—an Arab); attired in the costume that they used to wear; bold as they were in their manners; coming and going at seasons unexpected; appearing and disappearing in the same hour; running on foot, and outrunning chariots and horsemen; having that peculiarly wild and dramatic character which belonged to the Oriental; flashing denunciations before the people; shaking kings upon their thrones;—certainly, when you think of these prophets, there seems to

be nothing to justify the declaration respecting John that no man born of woman was equal to him. And I suppose it must have referred to a certain grandeur of nature that was in him. I suppose there must have been in him a certain largeness of spirit, a certain sincerity of disposition, a certain breadth of moral constitution and inner life, to which reference was made. I suppose he must have been so organized that those who approached him felt that he was an august man, made upon a larger pattern than ordinary men. Although he did not perform as many functions, or have as many social relations, as persons that went before him, he undoubtedly was the mightiest of them, and went down deeper, and stretched out wider, and lifted himself up higher. But as we did not see him, and as these other prophets are more prominently set forth in the records of history, it always seems to us as though this eulogy was somewhat extravagant. Christ, however, measures John, and ranks him, saying,

"There is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but [mark this] he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

That is, "In that new kingdom which I am bringing in; in that new kingdom in which the sweet moral nature of man shall predominate over the harsh and acerb passions and appetites; in that new kingdom in which the supersensuous faculties shall be enthroned, and the gross and basilar instincts shall be servitors—in that new kingdom, John himself shall seem coarse." He was a stern man, built according to the pattern, and the best pattern, of the Old Testament, speaking to the conscience and to the fear of men, and vindicating the visible law and the institutions of his country, and bringing home to men the consciousness of their weakness and wickedness. He was an honored and stalwart and stanch man. But he had not the blossoming elements of grace and sweetness, he had not the heavenly mindedness, which belonged to the new empire of faith and love. And the least in the new kingdom would be greater than he.

This leads Jesus to consider, next, his own success, as contrasted with John's. You perceive how wonderfully events fall out in sequence, in chronological order, here. He evidently was thinking of the interviews which had taken place between him and the people, and of John's ministrations among them; and he said,

"Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?"

And then a figure rose up in his mind. For Jesus was one who did not ask dignified things to bear out feeble thoughts. He had such power in his thought that he could take insignificant things and make them dignified.

You shall see in every house, children playing at various games. You shall see in the corner of the nursery two or three little girls gathered together, and with their tiny dishes, playing "have company." Or they go through a mimic representation of some other phase of life. Now a doll is sick, and the doctor is called, and the doll must take some medicine. And all the expostulations are employed which have been addressed to the little lady herself at different times when she has been sick. She insists that the dose is not bitter but sweet, and resorts to all manner of gentle little falsehoods which it seems have been practiced upon her. And so in a variety of ways the children imitate life. On another occasion you will see gone through with all the circumstance of the reception of company. At one time or another you will see enacted in children's plays pretty much all that they have seen in life.

So in the olden times human nature was true to itself. Children used to gather in the open squares, in the market places, and play their games. And sometimes they would say, "Let us play wedding;" and they would pipe and make music, as if the company were going out to arrange themselves; and there would be the little mimic procession. At other times they would say, "No, let us play funeral." And then they would put on lugubrious looks, and dishevel as much as possible their hair, and make believe sorrow. Some would cry a little, and the rest would groan, and hone, and "take on," as the saying is. And so they would mimic a funeral scene.

And you have seen children that would get mad, and would not play. It seems that it was just so at that time, and there. And that is just the thing that struck Christ's mind. The scene came up in his imagination of children in the market-place, where one says to another, "We piped unto you, and you would not dance. And then, seeing that you did not want that, we tried the other thing, and mourned to you; and then you would not play. You would not play either wedding or funeral. You would not play at all." It was that distinctive scene from childhood that our Saviour seized. And he said:

"Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept."

Then he made just that application. "This generation," he said, "have been tried both by things touching fear and sorrow, and by things touching joy and pleasure and hope. John came neither eating nor drinking. He was an ascetic. He was bred in the wilderness. He was clothed in skins. He fed upon locusts and wild honey—the coars-

est and meanest of cheap food. He came as a stern man, and laid down the law to men. And what did they do? Well, some followed him; but the great mass of the people said, 'Why, he hath a devil.' That is, they called him crazy. They used to think that demoniac possessions were the origin of insanity. And they said of John, "He is a fantastic, insane man, and he lives in the wilderness, and teaches and preaches these things because his brain is out of order." That was the fate which befel a man who was endeavoring to impress upon men pure morality, and all the requirements of the eternal government of God. Such was the effect which he produced, that they turned away from his message, and said, "He is crazy." Then the Son of Man came eating and drinking. He left the wilderness. He came back into civilized life. He dwelt in villages and towns according to the manners and customs of the people. He went forth preaching of familiar things. And his preaching was lighted up by much that was attractive and congenial. By ten thousand sympathies he made himself dear to the people. And what is said about him? 'Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.'

We are not to suppose that this was the testimony of all the people. We are not to suppose, as some have rashly taught, that Christ lived so convivially that it was the impression throughout the community that he was a *bon vivant*. This is the voice of that part of the community that desired to find something against him. Among the common people there was no such thing said. He did eat and drink with men; and he ate and drank as they ate and drank. When he was in the houses of the poor, he ate their plain fare; and when he was in the houses of the rich, he ate the dishes which burdened their tables. They made feasts for him; and when they poured the wine of the country, he drank the wine of the country. When they set before him the luxuries of the country, he partook of the luxuries of the country. He made himself a man among men. He fell in with the customs of the people among whom he sojourned. Nothing is more striking than how perfect a Jew he was, than how rigorous he was in his conformity to the modes of life in accordance with which he was brought up. So much of a Jew was he, that he did not abandon the synagogue. Every Sabbath found him in his place worshiping with the people, as was the custom of his country. And when he preached the Sermon on the Mount, lest the people should suppose that he was seeking to bring in a new custom, he said,

"Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For I verily say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

He did not wish them to think that he desired to overthrow their old system. On the contrary, he asserted his Hebraism; he declared his faith in the old Mosaic institutions; and he did it all his life, through his whole career, and to the very last of it. A stranger, knowing nothing of his history, would scarcely have discriminated him in any respect from a model Jew, so perfectly had he adapted himself to the ways of the people. He was, therefore, a man among men. And his enemies said, "He is a glutton," because he sat at meat with rich men; and "He is a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," because he went down from the high places where he consorted with the rich, to the poorest and lowest and most despised, and consorted with them.

Here, then, had come the ascetic John and the social Christ; here had come the ministration of terror on the conscience, and here had come the ministration of hope on the heart; here had come the rude man of the wilderness that thundered repentance in the ears of the terrified crowd, and here had come the man that dropped tears with the weepers, that stopped the bier and called the dead to life again, and gave back to the stricken mother her only son; here came the man that little children ran to, and clasped, and climbed up upon; here came the man that was everywhere sought by the high and by the low, by the gentle and the humble—and what was the result? It was said to them, "Let us play funeral" (going back to the image of the children), and they would not; and then it was said to them, "Let us play wedding," and they would not. They would not take the truth that they needed to make them better men, either from John or from Christ. They would not take it from one that represented intellect and conscience, nor would they take it from one that represented heart and faith.

"But wisdom is justified of all her children."

That is the end of this discourse. And with this narrative, thus drawn out; with this picture of the method of Christ's teaching, of the way in which he found his subjects, and of the kind of incidents which he brought in for illustration to make the truth, not abstract and remote and systematic, but homely and most familiar; with this interior view, as it were, of a portion of a day's labor, we shall leave the historic and descriptive part, and proceed to a few points of practical application.

1. The faults which men are accustomed to find with religion and with its ministrations, are symptoms, not so much of the imperfection of external things, as of the condition of their own hearts. It is true that religious institutions are very imperfect. None feel this more than those who administer them, or are responsible for them. It

is true that they who preach the truth are very weak men, and preach with many errors and much imperfection. None know this so well as those who preach the most. And there are many in the community who stand quite disconnected from any true religious work, or any useful occupation of beneficence or of mercy, and are perpetually finding fault with churches, and with ministers, and with all the varied institutions which have sprung up under the Gospel of Christ. And they would fain make us believe that the reason why they are not better, is that these things are so poor. But, after all, the reason why men are not truly spiritual and Christian, is not the incompetence of external institutions; it is not the pooriness of preaching; it is not the imperfections of the church; it is not that there are so many unadaptations in the external institutions of the religious world. It is that men have at heart an indisposition to conform to that by which they might go out of the animal and lower life, into the spiritual life. The trouble is in the men themselves, and not in the institutions that surround them. They are like sick children. Whatever the nurse may bring, whether it be of food, or of drink, or of some object of amusement, the child pushes it pettishly away. Nothing suits the child. It is not because the picture is not beautiful; it is not because the drink is not cooling and palatable; it is not because the food is not good: it is because the irritable nerve is such that nothing seems good, no matter how good it may be, and nothing seems desirable, no matter how attractive it may be. And there are hundreds of men in every community who refuse to bow down the pride of their nature, and who refuse to accept the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of the heart that they carry in them, although the reasons which they allege are reasons of exterior religion.

2. When men are under the full dominion of worldly passions, you cannot change them by any modifications of manner. I do not mean by that, that there is no skill to be used; I do not mean that there is not a difference between power and weakness in preaching; I do not mean that clear thinking is not better than feeble thinking, or none at all; I do not mean that there is not an art, and a sublime art, in winning men, so that they shall be tempted or persuaded to leave their evil ways. But this I say: There is no thinking, and no combination of arguments, and no skill, that can reach to overthrow men's pride, and men's avarice, and men's selfishness and sordidness. There is no power short of the Spirit of God that can do it. When the heart of man is fortified in his weakness; when it is desperately set in him to do evil, all that men can do is to break upon them as the sea breaks on the rocky shore. It is the sea that is sent back, and the rock that stands firm. There are scores of men

who live for the flesh; who live under the dominion of the senses; and who yet live in the full light of truth. None know it better than they. There are men that have read every word of Scripture; there are men that are familiar with every argument and statement in theology; there are men that have known and seen much of the power of God in revivals; but there is within them that fixed, rooted, toughened life of sin that refuses to yield itself to any power which can be wielded merely by the hands of men.

3. And that which is true of individuals, is true also of communities. There are many men who find fault with reformatory communities, complaining that they were not wisely begun; that they were not carried forward skillfully; that they were instituted by rough men; that harsh measures were employed; that therefore prejudices were engendered, that men were exasperated, their lower nature being excited,—all of which is true. It is memorably true of the struggle that we waged for human liberty. It is true that if we were to go back and examine the pioneers in that struggle, and measure their career, we would have no right to believe that they could have succeeded. Nor do I believe that they, as instruments, did succeed. There was a Providence of which they were pioneers, which they did not understand, and which we do not understand. There was a purpose of God; and they, as it were, were flung out as *avant couriers*, not knowing themselves the message which they were carrying. But if you measure them by any approved standard of skill, or any history of success, they were unskilled in their mode of approaching the community. And yet, if they had been wise as serpents and harmless as doves, it would have made no difference. It was one of those cases in which the hearts of men were fully set in them to do evil, and in which lust, laziness, and lucre—the three prime demons of slavery—held the hearts and purposes of men. No wisdom, and no moral power, could ever have tempted them to relax their hold upon their ill-gotten gains, or to remit their captives to liberty again. When, therefore, men said, “Abolition might have come long ago; and yet the evils of slavery were augmented,” it was finding fault, first, on the one side, with John, and then, on the other side, with Jesus. At one time they were appealed to by that which was gentle, and inviting, and winning, and at another time by that which was threatening; but neither the one nor the other would meet them. They did not want to be met. John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said that he had a devil; and then Christ came eating and drinking, and they said that he was a glutton. The Quakers came with peace, and they received no better fare than Garrison, who came with war. It might have been better or worse,

according to circumstances; but the trouble was that the hearts of men did not mean to give up. The kingdom of Satan was within; the armed man did not mean to be dispossessed; and nothing but the terrific revolutions that shook down the nation were competent to remedy the evil that was eating out the life of the people.

4. It will encourage and comfort all those who are laboring without immediate results, whether it be for themselves, for their households, for the communities in which they dwell, or for any great reformatory objects which are the outspringings of the Gospel of Christ, to know that the two greatest preachers—John and Christ, respectively—looked over the field where they had spent their lives, laboring about equal periods (probably about two years each), and saw little fruit as the result of their labors. Christ went through his whole life conscious that he was doing immediately but little. He gathered no church. He laid the foundation of no church that was to be gathered. He set aside nothing of the ancient system. He left that to be corrected, so far as it was erroneous, by the advancing force of the new principle. The disciples themselves did not believe that they were sent to found a church. Men tell us that the apostles did. How, then, shall we account for the fact that twenty years after Paul's conversion and Christ's ascension, Paul was in Jerusalem, and the apostles came to him and said, "It is charged that you do not believe in Moses, and in his institutes. Now there are two men under vows, and going up to cleanse themselves: do you go with them into the temple and pay their charges, that it may be a testimony that you do believe in Moses, and in the temple, and in the institutes of the old economy"; and that for that very sake, Paul did go up into the temple and pay those men's charges, calling the priests to witness, that it might be reported of him, and that it might everywhere be known, that he was not attempting to do away with Mosaism. And is it to be supposed, when for twenty years the Christians all met in the temple, and the synagogue was the place where they worshiped, and there was not a Christian church separate from and independent of Judaism—is it to be supposed, when this was the case, that Christ had filled the minds of the apostles with the idea of an absolutely new church, and an entirely new economy, as we are taught that he had? No, there was nothing of this kind. Christ did not break away from the church of his fathers. He left that to be dealt with by the process of growth. He simply said this: "No outward form of church whatever, no externality, shall influence men." None was conditioned or transmitted. Nor did his private discourses with his disciples lay the foundation for any. As a matter of history, all

modern churches have been the outgrowth of the old synagogue, little by little. It was a hundred years after Christ was on earth before there were any churches like our Christian churches. The whole thought that the Christianity of modern times was laid out in perspective by Christ, as an architect's plans are laid out, and that the apostles and disciples were told just how to organize the church, and just what to do in carrying it on, is fabulous. There is not a historical basis for a single part of it. Christ, as a Jew, and as a preacher of spirituality, declared that Moses and the prophets rightly interpreted to themselves the higher spiritual life. And the whole tenor of his ministry was to develop the spiritual side of man, and then let it, by the process of development, provide its own institutions, and come down, as it has, through long periods of time, and thus reach its final issue, as everything else does in the great scheme of progressive development.

And so, when Christ looked over his own ministry and life, though he came to give himself a ransom for many; though he knew that in himself, and in the truths which he made known to men, lay the seed of future history; although he felt that he brought into the world the new kingdom, and the higher life; it seemed to him that he was, comparatively speaking, a cipher. He gathered no great bands. Multitudes came after him, and then divided and went home. There was no fixed church in any such sense as we now understand the term *church*. There was no sect, there was no school, there were no great denominational influences, around about him. When he died, how was it? There were about five or six hundred men who retained an affectionate remembrance of him. They were scattered up and down throughout the land. That was all! Look! See the women going apart to mourn and grieve in a chamber. Here and there scattered throughout Jerusalem were those who had been most intimate with him. Look at them walking along the dusty way, climbing the hill westward to Emmaus, giving expression to their disappointment at his defeat, and saying, "We trusted that it had been he which would have redeemed Israel." See how, when, at last, he went out to Bethany and was taken from their sight, there were not more than could go back to Jerusalem and assemble in a single upper room. They were all that were left. And this was everything that was apparent of the work of God manifest in the flesh. This was the ministration of Christ in its immediate results. And yet, although there was so little for the sight, all the indications of modern history go to show that there was a leaven of Christ which has been silently working, and which will work till the whole is leavened.

Are you working in a like spirit, parents? In your children, fractious, and not rightly organized, it may be, are natures that must be waited for until some years further down, when they shall get the help of their now undeveloped faculties; and are you counseling and restraining them, and praying with them? Are you discouraged because your labors seem so great, and the fruits seem so little? Remember the labors of the apostles and prophets; and remember the labors of the Shepherd, Jesus himself. Remember how he gave his whole life, and reaped almost nothing in his own time. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; but only far down in the future. And shall the disciple be more than the Master? Shall the servant be greater than his Lord? Shall we be discouraged and not have heart to work on and on, because we do not immediately see the fruit of our labor?

Of those that labor out of the family, and in the church, how many there are that see the church itself feeble, its communicants few, and its influence in the community small! How many there are who have spent ten years, fifteen years, a score of years, in one place, bearing witness and preaching as their Master before them did, and yet who have but very little that cheers and comforts them! If they have been indolent, that is one reason for it; but in many such cases they have been faithful, conscientious, godly men. And why should they complain. If the Master spent his life freely, why should not they, his disciples, if it please God, be willing to stand in the field of duty, and pour out their lives?

There is something higher in an unsuccessful ministry carried out faithfully to the end, than there is in a very brilliant and successful ministry. Any man can work when every stroke of his hand brings down the fruit rattling from the tree to the ground; but to labor in season and out of season, under every discouragement, by the power of faith, through years and years and years, and to die, as Moses did, without the sight of the promised land—that requires a heroism which is transcendent. It may not shine nor illustrate itself on earth; but it will be seen in heaven. For there be those that are first here who shall be last in other world, and there be those that are last here, who shall be first there. Many a humble man, who has had no success in this world, many a pastor in some outlying church who has labored long and faithfully without any visible results, many a poor missionary who has spent his whole life in unrequited service, shall himself be amazed, amidst the amazement of all that behold, to find how high he rises and stands in the last great day. He goes up as one that has nothing to carry him; and behold, “he shines as the stars that shone over him in the firmament.”

And that which is true of pastoral labor, is just as true of lay labor in churches, or of labor in reformatory enterprises which are carried on outside of the churches. Those that labor in the cause of temperance, and those that labor for the rectification of morals—how often they are discouraged! It is comparatively an easy thing to put a broken bone in its place again, and reset the joint in its socket; but it is not an easy thing to control, and rightly develop, the enormous resources of pride. It is not an easy thing to suppress the jealousies and hatreds and rancors of the human heart. The man that undertakes to rectify the times in which he lives, undertakes to do, not only a gigantic work of faith and patience, but one that he must make up his mind to pursue, not according to sight, but according to faith. And no man, I think, ever puts the plow into the furrow and does not look back, and sows good seed therein, that a harvest does not follow. If he does not reap the fruit of his sowing, other men will. If you are laying right foundations, though you may not build on them, other men shall, and the topstones shall yet go up with shoutings of, “Grace, grace unto it.”

Let us, then, take comfort from this scene in the life of our Saviour. If we suffer obloquy, if we are rejected of men, and if we reap but little fruit from much labor, let us remember that we are in the school of him who came to give his life for the age in which he lived, but reaped almost nothing in that age. He died for the world; but he had to re-ascend to his Father's throne and sit patiently waiting through the centuries, before he could see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee our heavenly Father, with the memory of thy goodness upon us. Ever since we were born, thou hast commanded all things to serve us. The heaven above; the earth beneath; all the courses of thy providence, and the life thereof, which is of thy grace—these things have worked together to bring us up out of nature, and its grossness, and ignorance, and darkness, and selfishness, into the life of Christ, where is peace, and purity, and joy, and hope, and all gentleness and goodness. We thank thee for all the ministration of the past; for the knowledge which has been vouchsafed to us; for the influences which have been provided, and registered, and brought continually to bear upon us; for all restraint; for all incitement. We thank thee for our homes, and for all that there is in them that we yet delight to honor with affectionate and reverential memory; for their example and faith that have gone before. We thank thee for all the influences which early came from thee, from thy church, from thy word, from faithful witnesses. We thank thee for all that fellowship and sweet society in which we have been brought up.

And now, O Lord! we thank thee that thou hast continued thy mercies to

us even unto this day. The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. We have a goodly heritage. How much thou hast vouchsafed to us in the life that we have led in this house! How many have been the days (as we look back upon them, they are innumerable) of rich experience! What heights have we ascended! What visions have we beheld! What joys have been distilled upon us from above! What weariness has been rested! What doubts have been dispelled! What hopes have been kindled! What aspirations have been excited! How near hast thou brought to us things which before were invisible! How easily have we been able to reach forth and pluck from the tree of life the leaves that were for the healing of the nations. We rejoice in all the past, and take courage, and look forward into the future, believing that the same God that hath guided us thus far will guide us unto the end. And as unto a faithful friend we commit the keeping of our souls to thee, O, Father! to thee, O Redeemer and Saviour! to thee, O, sanctifying Spirit! And we beseech of thee that the life which we live may be a life, not in the flesh, but in the spirit. And in the time to come may we not fall behind the privilege of the times gone by. May we gather new strength. May we propose to ourselves nobler enterprises. May we desire to see every thought and every feeling brought into subjection to Christ Jesus. May all things shine in the presence of thy Spirit. Dwell in us, thou Source of light and of power—dwell in us, that our feebleness may be intoned, and that all things which are dark and doubtful may be purged by the bright shining light of thy countenance.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all that are in thy presence—upon each severally, as thou seest that he needs. Wilt thou grant an answer to the prayers of those who in burden of spirit have come up to thy sanctuary to-day, to present their wants to thee. How easy is it, when it is best, for thee to grant to thy children answers of mercy! And to those who seek relief at thy hands, either say that the troubles shall go, or say, My grace shall be sufficient for thee.

And we pray that thou wilt uphold all those who are tempted and tried; all those who walk in darkness; and all those who seem to themselves entangled and lost. Wilt thou succor them? And grant, if there be such present this morning, asking thy divine help, that they may have the intimation of thy presence, and the joy of thy salvation.

If there be those here this morning who are bereaved, and who look back upon many dark ways of trouble which have fallen upon them continuously, like drops of rain, we pray that thou wilt set thy bow in the heavens, that they may know that with every storm there is also the promise. May they, in the midst of their sorrows and bereavements, remember the Sufferer who, for their sake, was bowed down; who carried their griefs and their sorrows. And may they find present help in their time of need.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be with all those who are separated from us to-day, who are afar off, or detained at home. Be with each heart. Renew to each one thy covenant promises. Grant unto every one a portion of the Word of God. As we are here sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so may there be borne to them the air and the substance which exists in fuller measure in heaven.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that all in our midst who are perplexed, and heavy-laden with worldly things, and who are led only by earthly wisdom, may discern the things that are right, and seek to carry out right things.

Grant, we pray thee, that thy kingdom may come in every heart. Are there not those who have long since fallen away from their former belief? And is it not, at least, the time of their deliverance? Bring forth Spring out

the Winter of many a barren heart. O thou that hast power on high, we beseech of thee that thou wilt look upon those who are far from the truth and the faith of their childhood; who have been ensnared and carried into evil ways; and who have broken loose from the instruction of former times. O thou that canst restore sight to the blind, and give life to the dead, canst thou not bring back again to sight and life those who long ago lost sight of God and holy things? We pray that they may see the error of their ways: that they may be softened in heart; that they may be strengthened in purpose; that they may escape from the snares which are set for their destruction; that they may be brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

We pray for all that are teaching in Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes; for all that go forth teaching thy word; visiting those that are poor and needy, those that are sick, and those that are in prison. Will the Lord have them in his holy keeping, and grant unto them grace, mercy and peace. And may they, in their smaller circle, see of the travail of their souls; and may they be satisfied of the work that is prospered in their hands.

We pray that thou wilt bless all Churches of every name. We thank thee that there is more kindliness one toward another. Draw yet closer together the bonds that unite thy servants, and show them the way of concord and of peace. And we pray that the Gospel may be spread throughout all the world. And in our own land may we see temperance prevail, and the Sabbath revered, and laws wisely and purely created and administered.

We beseech of thee that schools and colleges may come up into remembrance before thee, to-day; and that all the Churches on our far frontier, and throughout the scattered regions that are in weakness, may be blest of thee. And wherever thy servants are, there, to-day, may the blessing of God and the strength of the Lord abide with them.

We thank thee that the prospect of peace is coming again upon the torn and distracted nations of the earth. Make haste and grant that the day may come; O, thou righteous God! when it shall not be needful for thee to stretch out the rod and to dash nations to pieces as a potter's vessel. May the better day come when nations shall have learned of thee: when there shall be given to all mankind the knowledge of God; when peace and temperance and self-government shall prevail, and when cruelty and superstition and oppression shall have passed away, and shall be as the dreams of the dreary night.

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise forevermore. *Amen.*

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